



OPENNED ANTHOLOGY

EDITED BY STEPHEN WILLEY AND ALEX DAVIES

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EDITORIAL

A Note on What Follows

by Steve Willey and Alex Davies

For those not familiar with Openned:

Openned is both a reading series and a website. The readings are held in the vault of a converted bank, which is now a downstairs basement room in an East London bar called the Foundry. The website, now in its second iteration, has gradually shifted in form from initially being used as an archival space to include a blog, regular poetry issues, and a press page; a form that is flexible and subject to flux. There have been (including the anthology reading) ten poetry readings to date of publication (the first reading was on 29th March 2006).

Considering that the anthology contains over one hundred and fifty pages of poetry, contributed by a total of thirty nine poets, this editorial will not attempt to serve as an introduction into the individual poetic works collected, as it is almost inevitable that such an attempt faces the danger of lapsing into a disingenuous tone of generalisation and banality. Instead, the editorial will explicate a few of the structures that have enabled the assemblage of the poetic work into the proceeding document; fundamental political mapping structures which remain implicit and concealed within the connective parts and hyperlinked sections of the anthology. This particular approach to the introduction aligns with how, as editors, we perceived the anthology taking shape.

The anthology has taken the best part of half a year to complete. It has been driven by Openned's particular positioning within wider social networks of poetic communities, which have often rapidly expanded outwards to include the variegated political, aesthetic and ideological positions of those communities and in turn, through the poetry and formative conversations with the poets themselves, have fed back into the politics and poetics of the Openned anthology. It was a conscious editorial decision to include within the anthology, as far as possible, every poet who had read at the Openned reading series so far, regardless of whether that squared with how close or distant we understand Openned to be to those formative communities at present.

In this sense, the anthology is both a poetic construction as well as a reflection of the political and poetical undercurrents that Openned managed to tap into, and help shape, over the last year and a half. The generative discords of these undercurrents are reflected in the wide variety of media and forms that the poetic work takes. The Openned anthology, sited online and in CD format, contains audio poems, documentation from live performances, video works, image pieces and text-based poems that differ widely in form. A politics for the Openned anthology should be one that locates itself within this formal variety and in Openned's dual inception as a reading series and online presence.

It is necessary to note that while the website has been as inclusive as possible, the reading series has been unavoidably London-centric. Having no substantial funds to pay our readers travelling expenses, it has been a welcome necessity that all poets read for free. In this sense the Openned anthology is a reflection of this London-centricity which, due to the generosity of individual readers and our continued determination to make more complex what may be understood as London poetry, has been able to include work from poets situated further away from London. This includes work from poets who spend most of their working time in Cambridge, Sussex, Surrey and Scotland, to name just a few locations. In this sense we hope that the Openned anthology will add to and further energise the textual fabric of the poetry it engages with, as well as energising the structures and communities of London itself. We also hope the anthology, through its attempt at serious documentation, will help encourage a process of continued attention to many of the younger poets based in London (something that has, importantly, already started to happen in some quarters) who are writing some of the most exciting, engaging and challenging poetry we have come across. Poetry in London is very much alive. In contradistinction from this, for a period of three months the issue page on our website will be engaged in a constant process of publishing work from poets who have not been able to attend the Openned readings; it does so under the title of 'Distances'.

To conclude, a map's co-ordinates may take the form of a thank you to those people, institutions and projects that we feel have made the Openned anthology possible and conceivable. First and foremost this list must include a thank you to all the readers that have read at Openned and contributed such interesting and provoking work. Then in no particular order of merit it is necessary to thank: Yt Communication, How2, Barque Press, Bad Press, Onedit, Crossing the Line, Writers' Forum, everyone involved in the Poetic Practice MA at Royal Holloway University of London, Archive of the Now and Itch Away. Unsurprisingly, many of the projects listed above have been created and instituted by the readers that feature in this anthology. A more comprehensive list of those Openned is in dialogue with is present on the links page of our web site.

On a more personal note, we would particularly like to thank: Jonathon at the Foundry for his anti-fiscal stylings, Sean Bonney for his continued support, encouragement and own-pocket ways and means, James Byrne for encouraging the tributary, Adam Stark for wiring electric dreams, John Sparrow for noting oranges stink on the tube, and Redell Olsen, for opening invisible doors in walls.

Finally, it is hoped that this anthology, which at times has only been able to publish sections of work from poets who are embarking on larger projects and poetic sequences, encourages an engagement with not only the poetry featured, but with the interconnecting tissues of exchange and blockage, which flow between and fuse the various poets and their projects; tissues that continue to cycle both on and off the page.

Welcome to the Openned anthology.